

Washington, D.C. – The National Environmental Education Foundation has found that Environmental Education curriculums improve student performance across the board, not only enhancing science classes, but also increasing reading and math scores and reducing discipline problems. At yesterday's Education and Labor Committee mark-up session, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) voted in favor of the No Child Left Inside Act (HR 3036) to extend the National Environmental Education Act (NEEA), providing additional funding and adding new provisions. This legislation allots \$14 million for the NEEA for fiscal year 2009, \$5.2 million more than the program has received for fiscal year 2008. — "I am pleased that we have passed this bill through committee in its current form because it approaches environmental education in a practical and effective way," said Congressman Sestak. "We have provided funds to implement more environmental programs in secondary and post secondary schools, establish more training for teachers so that they can most effectively instruct their students, and create ways to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation when it comes to the House floor."

This extension of NEEA enhances the Environmental Education and Training Program by forming programs to promote outdoor environmental education activities as part of the regular school curriculum and schedule; encouraging individuals who are traditionally underrepresented in environmental professions to pursue postsecondary degrees that lead to careers in these fields; and creating opportunities for enhanced and ongoing professional development in environmental education. The 2009 authorization also requires the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to consult with the Secretary of Education to make grants available for professional development.

Instruction for environmental education is improved by bringing teachers into contact with working professionals in environmental fields; supporting environmental education distance learning programs for teachers; and providing environmental education summer workshops or institutes for teachers.

A new part of this act, the National Capacity Environmental Education Grant Program (NCEEG), includes measures to evaluate the most effective ways to approach environmental education and compel program beneficiaries to develop a plan to best teach this subject. Grant applicants must submit an annual report showing progress towards achieving program goals such as increased student exposure to environmental activities. The program authorizes the Secretary of Education to award 1-to-3 year competitive grants to nonprofit organizations, State educational agencies, local educational agencies or institutions of higher education. Some of the purposes for which recipients can use the funds are to develop and implement State curriculum frameworks in environmental education; produce a State Environmental Literacy

Plan; and conduct studies that evaluate the effectiveness of different means of teaching environmental education.

“I am a firm believer that environmental security is a critical part of our country’s national security,” said Congressman Sestak. “We are facing difficult challenges, such as global warming and watershed management, and we cannot address these environmental issues, which are critical to the health and safety of our citizens, without attracting students to study for environmental careers and without giving them proper training.”

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.